

THEY KICK UP HIGH

Lively Scenes in the Western Mining Camps.

DISPLAY OF ANKLE AND HOSE

Tiny Feet Kicking Off the Western Slouch Hat—Women as Faro Dealers.

"Look out there, pant." Up went a tiny foot, amid the rustle of petticoats and skirts. It caught the rim of a miner's slouch hat, and twisting it a moment on her toe the young girl hurried it into a corner of the dance hall. "I gave you warning," said a young man to his friend. "But the girl's foot was quicker than words." The boys cheered and the hatless miner had to "set 'em up" to the crowd.

Were you ever in a mining camp dance hall? From early in the evening until after midnight, and often until daybreak, there is the sound of music, with dancing and drinking. After every dance the man must treat. The girl either takes a drink or receives a pasteboard slip, which she clutches at the bar. They make nights lively with dancing and feats of high kicking. Everything goes, from the old Virginia



SHE KICKED OFF HIS HAT.

reel and square dance to the waltz and Spanish fandango. These Rocky mountain dance hall girls never seem to tire. It is a rough, hard life, but it is their business. They are trained into it. Their salary is three dollars a night and whatever they can make cashing their checks for dancing. At an elevation of eight thousand and ten thousand feet, where the tenderfoot gets out of breath with the least exercise, these girls can dance all the night long and never weary.

How they can dance and kick! Many of them are graceful waltzers. When business is good the scene often becomes boisterous. Miners and cowboys swing their girls with vigor. And the girls, not to be outdone by the men, like "gayety" dancers, seize the bottom of their skirts, dance a jig, displaying a liberal amount of pretty hose, and, when hilarious, think nothing of kicking off a man's hat.

The most of the frontiersmen are good dancers. Many of them, in rough garb, are experts in the art, for some of them learned it in fashionable ball-rooms in the east before they came west to seek their fortunes. The big, heavy boots for mountain travel does not prevent them from being nimble and easy on the floor. If a man does not know how to dance the girls will soon teach him.

The crowd begins to assemble about eight o'clock in the evening. By nine the crowd is growing merry. The orchestra generally consists of a piano player, fiddler and cornet blower, who occupy seats on a platform in the rear. With coats off, hats on or off, they start in for the night. Old time music is played, for that is the most popular. As long as a dance girl has a partner the musicians must grind away, and that often means until morning.

Dancing and gambling are often combined under one establishment. Along the sides of the hall are faro, keno, roulette, California push, the red, white and blue ball, stud horse poker, Spanish monte and other gambling tables. At the time of any great mining camp boom it is a gay and brilliantly lighted scene that greets the eye on entering the long hall. If it is the first time the tenderfoot has been in such a place



HUNTING A PARTNER.

he almost wonders if he will get out alive. The air is heavy with cigar smoke and the scent of liquor; the orchestra is playing; the floor is filled with dancers; there are hundreds of spectators watching the dancers and gambling tables. Amid the din is heard the stentorian voice of the floor manager "calling" the dance. The gambling tables are crowded, and sometimes a woman, with jeweled fingers and sparkling diamonds, is dealing faro.

Among the players are often found the dark-haired scoundrels, who delight in a game with Spanish cards, which they carry with their cigarette package.

The floor manager is a prominent person, and he is chosen for his might. "Two I've got, and two more I want," he shouts out in a tone that can be distinctly heard by all. He walks around the hall in his shirt sleeves, sporting a negro minstrel diamond and a watch chain of solid gold whose heavy links look almost strong enough to haul a saw log. Four couples are now ready. Then along comes a fifth. "Come on, boys," he says, "and make it a double header." If they are slow in responding the girls without partners go into the crowd in search of one. Seizing the nearest man they generally succeed in putting him out on the floor, notwithstanding his resistance, and making him dance, which he, of course, has to pay for.

"All ready," cries out the floor manager. The pianist thrunders at the keys, the cornet player strikes a loud note, the fiddler brings down the well-known bow with a twang. "Fire—fire—fire—our foot—our foot and back again—

ain!" shouts the floor manager, and another dance begins.

In this set is a cowboy. He is wearing his "chaps" and spurs, the latter jangling on the floor as he goes through the dance.

When the dance has ended the floor manager distributes tickets, which the girls can take in lieu of a drink and cash at the bar.

Leadville now has but one variety show. The old place formerly run by "Pop" Wyman still has the clock on which he had inscribed the following: "Please don't swear." Here it was that "Pop" had a costly Bible, already famous in the history of the frontier, chained to his bar. "I have been asked ten thousand times," he recently said to me, "why I had that Bible chained to my bar. I have never told anyone the reason why. I have promised the secret to but one man, but if I should die suddenly the chances are that no one will ever know. But there was a reason for having that Bible at my bar. It has been read by many a man drunk and by many a man sober. I have often had some one of the boys cry out: 'Pop, another fellow has got it,' at the same time pointing out a man who had become absorbed in reading some chapter. My bar, theater and gambling establishment cleared me sixty thousand dollars in one year in the pioneer days at Leadville."

"Pop" Wyman later became a resident of Denver. His face, oddly enough, bears a striking resemblance to that of Henry Ward Beecher. He brought with him the old Bible when he moved to that city, which tens of thousands have read in the old Leadville barroom. I had met him in a hotel at Grand Junction, Col., where he had gone to look after a ranch he owned near that place. He is now dead and has just been buried. The secret of the old Leadville Bible may never be known. Joe Jenkins, from Kansas City, and for several years connected with Leadville journalism, was the one whom "Pop" Wyman said would tell me the secret if ever anyone revealed it. But I don't think he saw Mr. Jenkins after his talk with me, and the secret connected with what some considered the most historic Bible in the Rocky mountains will probably remain a mystery for all time.

I recall an interesting scene in Arbour's old dance hall, in Silver Cliff, in the winter of 1879-80. The Silver Cliff



"DON'T SING THAT SONG HERE."

excitement then ranked only second to that of Leadville, and thousands were rushing to the new Eldorado. The great dance hall was crowded with miners, prospectors and tenderfeet. Two sets of dancers had been on the floor all the evening. Two long rows of gaming tables had also been running at full blast, and at midnight there came a lull in the dancing for lunch. Some of the boys took possession of the platform, and a young fellow dressed in jacket and overalls threw his slouch hat back on his head and struck up some familiar tune on the piano. There were about a dozen in the party who joined in the singing. Suddenly one of the boys started up "Home, Sweet Home." The young man at the piano struck in with an accompaniment, and that old-time song of loved ones and home associations began to fill the great hall. "Pop" Arbour was soon seen rushing towards the orchestra platform. He had no objection to Gospel hymns, but entered a protest at "Home, Sweet Home."

"Don't, boys; don't sing that song here."

"Why not?" asked one of the boys.

"You will make all the girls homesick and break up the dance hall. Sing any song you want to, but not 'Home, Sweet Home.'" In the first days of a boom the dance hall is the prominent boomed feature. If you want to learn the latest news go to the dance hall. The new strikes in the camp are reported there. The dance-hall gossip is a bulletin of the news of the day. I have seen Sunday-school superintendents and old church deacons of the east mingling in the crowd. And back of the history of some of these girls is a romance weird and thrilling.

A Thoughtful Landlord.

There is a big hotel in San Francisco, says the Colorado Sun, that pays delicate attention to its guests, and also gets some valuable advertising for itself, by its liberal use of flowers among the guests. There, when a man and wife arrive and are ushered into that most cheerful of human habitations, a hotel bedroom, the desolation is soon relieved by a bellboy coming with a basket of flowers which he says: "Mr. —, the manager of the house, sends to Mrs. — with his compliments." This little attention has made the hotel famous.

Just Like His Pa.

Mother—Tommy, what do you mean by staying out so late? Don't you do so again.

Tommy—That's just like you, ma. Only a few days ago you said it pleased you lots to see that I was getting to be so much like my pa.—Jury.



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Barrows—True; but there are never so many people killed. There's only one victim in each case.—Harper's Bazar.



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